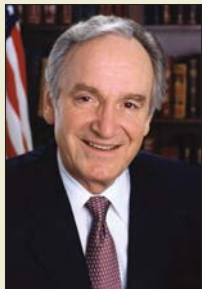


Congressional Quotes ■ WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

On June 23, the Senate Appropriations Committee met to mark up the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill, which funds the Legal Services Corporation. Faced with a Committee recommendation that would cut LSC's FY 2006 budget by more than \$6 million, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) delivered an impassioned appeal on behalf of the millions of low-income Americans who are denied access to our justice system because the need for civil legal services so outweighs its availability.



"We must do something about access to justice. The Committee provides only \$324.5 million in funding for the Legal Services Corporation; a reduction of more than \$6 million from last year and from what the House provided... Who is being penalized for the lack of funding? Poor women and children. 72 percent of legal services clients are women.

These women would otherwise have no legal assistance in family law matters including domestic violence, restraining orders and custody issues. Legal services is also the only assistance most women have in getting and keeping safe habitable housing. This assistance is critical in reducing homelessness amongst women and children." —Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)

When the full House met on June 14th to debate the appropriations bill that would fund the Legal Services Corporation, Congressmen on both sides of the aisle spoke out in defense of the single biggest funding source for civil legal services nationwide. Representatives Frank R. Wolf (R-VA) and Alan B. Mollohan (D-WV), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for funding LSC, fended off an amendment that would have taken \$10 million out of LSC's budget.



"Eighty percent of the legal needs of people in poverty are not addressed. We need to strike a balance with regard to the poor. This program helps the poor... So to take more money away to cut the Legal Services Corporation could dramatically impact the ability of low-income Americans to seek and obtain justice. Justice, justice thou shall pursue, and I think this is really an amendment that would hurt the poor, so I would hope that we would not accept it." —Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-VA)



"This is a bad amendment. It cuts a program that is desperately needed if we expect everybody in the country to participate in the American legal system, and we should expect, and want, and make sure that everybody participates in the American legal system that we are all so proud of." —Rep. Alan B. Mollohan (D-WV)

New Report Highlights Trend in Creation of Access to Justice Commissions

Delivering legal services to the millions of poor Americans who desperately need them is no easy task for the country's chronically under-funded, under-staffed and overwhelmed legal services programs.

Possessing more resilience than resources, legal services providers have long recognized the need to form partnerships with other actors in their states—bar associations, the judiciary, law schools, etc.—to get the job done. According to a new report, the creation of these formal partnerships has been continuing along a trajectory that is nothing short of meteoric. The report, released by the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association's



(NLADA) Access to Justice Support Project, finds that there are now only a handful of states without these "access to justice commissions" compared to 1999 when these partnerships existed in only four states. In the last year alone, five states and the



District of Columbia have created these commissions, with proposals for three more pending in other states. Created by state supreme courts and composed of bar leaders, judges, law professors and legal aid attorneys, these commissions are charged with marshaling the energy, expertise, and resources of stakeholders throughout the state to ensure that the poor can have their day in court. The Access to Justice Support Project was created as a resource for state leaders involved in these formal partnerships, and issues a yearly state-by-state report detailing the innovative projects developed by the various commissions. To read this report, visit the NLADA's website at www.nlada.org.